

The impact of globalization on Indian culture and literature: Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

The present study analyses the impact of Globalization on Indian Literature and culture with reference to Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. The effects of Globalization can be seen in the Indian Literature. Indian fiction finds reflections of various globalization themes. Globalization has assisted in the creation of an American atmosphere in India. Indian culture is no exception to this transformation process. With the emergence of globalization in India, our age old traditions and customs have loosened up their hold. With special reference to *The White Tiger*, the paper also sheds light on the social, cultural, and economic impact of globalization on the people of India, particularly in terms of its role in widening the gap between the upper and lower classes. It argues that globalization has contributed in creating two worlds in India: the lighted world and the world of Darkness, where the poor are marginalized and humiliated.

Keywords: globalization, Indian literature, culture, aravind adiga's, *the white tiger*

Introduction

Globalization

The term 'Globalization' is derived from the word 'globalize', which refers to the emergence of an international network of economic systems. Globalization can be defined as "a process in which more and more people become connected in more different ways across larger distances" (Lechner, 2009, 15) [4]. It is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. This worldwide integration permits people to travel, communicate, and invest internationally. Globalization also implies a shrinking of the world in terms of space and time, since it "increases the 'thickness' of human interaction and the impact this interaction has on the earth itself" (Ervin & Z achary, 2008, 2) [2].

Impact of Globalization on Indian Culture

Globalization has changed our current social conditions and contributed to the deteriorating of nationality and the creation of globality (Ritzer, 2009) [5]. It has a wide role to play the world over. It has left its footprints in every field of life. The exchange of world views and ideas has led to a major transformation of the standard of living globally. Indian culture is no exception to this transformation process. Globalization quickened this process and resulted in the fusing of cultural practices and increased advertising of culture through influx of MacDonald's and Pizza Huts, etc., in all metropolitan cities and through the celebration of special days like Valentine's Day, Father's Day, etc. With the emergence of globalization, our age old traditions and customs have slackened off their hold.

India has a rich cultural milieu which is well-known to the whole world. Globalization has not only led to in the westernization of India, but on the contrary, the Indian culture has also spread its impact globally. Culture and traditions of any geographical region hold a special significance with respect to their distinctiveness and that is the differentiating feature for a population within a geographical boundary. This

distinctiveness and individuality has been disturbed in varying degrees in lieu of globalization. Such an impact is very much pronounced when they hit a developing country like India.

Impact of Globalization on Indian Literature

The effects of Globalization can be seen in the Literatures of the World too. From the 20th century a good deal has been written on globalization and responses to globalization. On one hand, many researchers observe and examine works of literature so as to find reflections of varied globalization themes within the texts and contexts and also to substantiate the realities of globalization all the way through literary forms. On the other hand, literature and literary studies are developed into a podium for supporting, evoking and interpreting different social, literary, cultural, and political concepts within the globalization realm. The impact of Globalization can be seen in Indian Literature too. The contemporary Indian novel in English has now moved to capture the new tremors caused by the overwhelming influx of the global capital and policies of free trade after 1991, which are restructuring every aspect of the Indian life with increasing intensity. The drastic economic changes and policies brought about by the Globalization in India have created two countries: the India of Light and the India of Darkness. The India of Light represented by the rich who consists of a small minority of the Indian population, while the bulk of lives in the India of Darkness, a place blemished by poverty, desolation, and deprivation. The impact of these changes on India is examined meticulously in Aravind Adiga's novel, *The White Tiger*.

The White Tiger

Born in India and raised in Austria, Aravind Adiga is the fifth Indian author to win the Man Booker Prize in 2008, for his debut novel, *The White Tiger*. This Booker Prize winner novel study the distinction between India's ascend as a modern global economic giant and the protagonist, Balram, who comes from rustic poverty background. The major theme of the novel is to present the impact of globalization on Indian

democracy. All through the novel Adiga remarks about the first world influence on the third world countries. The West is the adjudicator and the jury of every facets of third world behaviour.

The story begins with a letter from a self-made Indian entrepreneur, Balram Halwai, who narrates the story of his own success to the Chinese Premiere. Born in a poor family in a backward village, he grows up in extreme poverty and deprivation; he is not allowed to complete his education and is employed as a child labour in a local tea stall. Running away from his village, Balram seeks a job in the city and finds one at his erstwhile village landlord's house, who has now moved to the city. A major part of the novel depicts Balram's life as a servant cum driver at the household of his former landlord, and the kind of exploitation and class difference that exists between the rich masters and their poor servants. Consequently, in an urge to escape his situation and enjoy the luxuries of life available to the rich, Balram kills his employer, robs his money and finally finds a new successful life of entrepreneurship in the hub of India's globalization- the city of Bangalore.

Balram justifies his actions as the only resort for resistance left in his state of oppression. It was either to submit to servitude that society had destined for him, or to break out of the coop and embrace the global network, even if that includes murder. The rhetoric he uses is thus essentially one of binaries- old India vs. new India, the feudal oppression vs. the neoliberal liberation, the failed state vs. the successful market. The novel depicts that Globalization replaces the native culture by consumerist culture. Take for example, when Balram says, "I should explain to you, Mr Jiabao, that in this country we have two kinds of men: Indian liquor men and English liquor men. Indian liquor was for village boys like me - toddy, arrack, country hooch. English liquor, naturally is for rich. Rum, whisky, beer, gin - anything the English left behind."(*The White Tiger* 73)

All throughout the novel, some form of America seems to pop up in a key moment. It's subtle, and the reader can easily pass over it without giving any second thought to the matter, but each time has its significance. Take for example when Balram is describing Ashok's corruption, "you've got plenty of places to drink beer, dance, pick up girls, that sort of thing. A small bit of America in India" (173). This goes back to the motif of Identity, someone trying to be something they're not. Balram sees Ashok being transformed by the influence of American culture, the creeping globalization that is taking over Delhi. The next situation was an ironic one, when the fat minister's assistant spoke about drinking and elections, "Elections, my friend, can be managed in India. It's not like in America. Everyone has whiskey in their car in Delhi, Ashok, didn't you know this?" And finally, Balram described his murder weapon, "It's a good, strong bottle, Johnnie Walker Blackwell worth its resale value." The reader can see just how embedded American culture is in the Indian society, while every person is trying to become their own "Individual" (245). Underlying Adiga's descriptions of the boom in outsourcing Bangalore's gleaming call-centres are the idea that India is making itself the servant of European and American companies.

All the way through the novel English is represented as the language of master or superior in India. There are many examples in the novel which bring to light the superiority of

English language. The opening of the novel itself suggests the dominance and supremacy of English. Balram writes to Jiabao, "Neither you nor I speak English but, there are some things that can only be said in English" (3).

Another instance is "Ashok," she said. "Now hear this. Balram, what is it we're eating?" I knew it was a trap, but what could I do? - I answered. The two of them burst into giggles. "Say it again, Balram. They laughed again. "It's not p iJJA. It's pizza. Say it properly." "Wait - you're mispronouncing it too. There's a T in the middle. *Peet.Zah*" (154).

Throughout the novel, Adiga represents the impact of Globalization on India. It has made radical changes in each and every sphere of Indian life. Globalization offers a social world whose precincts have become fluid. It has imposed global culture by debasing local individualistic culture. Globalization has affected the Indian political arena too. The first world countries are trying to inflict their rules and laws upon the third world countries in the guise of lending out a helping hand.

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